

# News Release

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## **HHS announces actions to improve safety and quality of child care**

Helping to answer President Obama's call to ensure quality early education for every American child, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) proposed today a new regulation for public comment that will better ensure children's health and safety in child care and promote school readiness. Under the proposed rule, states, territories and tribes would be required to strengthen their standards to better promote the health, safety and school readiness of children in federally funded child care.

Millions of working parents depend on child care and assume certain safety requirements are already in place for their children, but standards vary widely across the states. Many states do not enforce even basic standards such as fingerprinting, background checks and first aid training for providers. This puts our children at risk.

"Many children already benefit from the excellent care of high-quality child care providers who are meeting or exceeding the proposed requirements," said HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. "However, too many children remain in settings that do not meet minimum standards of health and safety. These basic rules ensure that providers take necessary basic steps to shield children from an avoidable tragedy."

The proposed rule would only apply directly to child care providers who accept Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) funds. More than 500,000 providers serve about 1.6 million low-income children through CCDF. Many more children would benefit, however, because the providers also serve non-CCDF children.

Under the proposed rule, states would require that all CCDF-funded child care providers:

- Receive health and safety trainings in specific areas
- Comply with applicable state and local fire, health and building codes
- Receive comprehensive background checks (including fingerprinting)
- Receive on-site monitoring

The rule would also require states to share information with parents through user-friendly websites about provider health, safety and licensing information. While some states already post health and safety reports online, the new rule would bring all states up to this standard.

"Parents know the needs of their own children," said Shannon Rudisill, director of the Office of Child Care. "However, parents don't always have enough information to help them make the right choice when choosing a child care provider. This proposal would give parents the necessary tools to choose quality care that fully meets their needs."

While the proposed rule establishes new minimum standards, it also recognizes the need for innovation and flexibility and allows states and communities to tailor their specific approaches to best meet the needs of the children and families they serve. The rule would not change or impede a state's ability to license child care providers as they see fit.

The administration continues to work with Congress to reauthorize the Child Care and Development Block Grant, which was last reauthorized in 1996. This rule does not take the place of reauthorization, but rather proposes long overdue reforms to better ensure that low-income working families have access to safe, high-quality child care that is essential for healthy early childhood development.

HHS is requesting the public's input on this proposed regulation. The comment process, which lasts for 75 days, allows for feedback on the proposed rule.

The proposed rule will be on public display today at <https://www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection>. Once it is published in the Federal Register, the public can view it and submit comment at: <http://www.regulations.gov/>.

For more information about HHS' child care programs, please visit <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ>.

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